



Greetings, I have been an operator in the legal Cannabis industry for over 7 years, I am on the national board of the National Cannabis Industry Association NCIA and am a past leadership member of Maryland NORML amongst many contributions to this industry. As a woman of color with vast experience in the Michigan, California and Maryland Cannabis markets I feel the below amendments make the best sense for an equitable and fair adult use market in Maryland.

I request the following AMENDMENTS to HB0556 before favorable consideration:

1. Align medical and adult-use cannabis possession and home cultivation protections. This bill establishes two different enforcement standards for Maryland adults: one standard for adults who are certified medical cannabis patients and a different standard for all other adults. Under the proposed legislation, a medical patient can cultivate up to 4 cannabis plants and possess up to 4 ounces of cannabis but all other adults can only grow 2 plants and possess up to 1.5 ounces of cannabis. This two-tiered system increases enforcement complexity and disparate treatment – it leads police officers to ask intrusive personal medical questions, it advantages financially secure adults who are easily able to register under the state’s medical program, and it disadvantages low-income adults who are less likely to work with a doctor and pay the necessary medical program enrollment fees. A uniform “personal use” standard is easier for everyone involved and would put Maryland on par with VA and DC – failure to make this change would leave Maryland citizens under the most punitive system in the region with the highest risk of avoidable police encounters.
2. The law must also clarify that employees cannot be fired exclusively for a positive cannabis drug test; legally using cannabis when not on-the-clock must not be grounds for dismissal. Employers may fire an employee for failing to perform their duties or being impaired, but should not be punished simply for having legally consumed cannabis during personal time.
3. Cottage industry production is an American tradition and has been part of the Maryland economy since time immemorial – the law must allow jurisdictions to license very small “cottage industry” cannabis producers (up to 1,500 square feet) who would then have their cannabis tested, processed, labeled, and sold by state-licensed and regulated businesses. We do not advocate for unregulated craft producers, but citizens who wish to produce cannabis and bring it to the legal, regulated market should have access to a business license, not jail time. Many of our state licensed dispensaries support this program because it allows them to partner with local producers and carry unique products. Individuals who wish to “come out of the shadows” will do so if given the opportunity to “get right with the law.” Providing eager, aspiring growers with a legal pathway to “give it a try” is *essential* for eliminating the illicit market because it gives eager, aspiring growers a way to put their surplus under a regulated point-of-sale instead of falling into the temptation of making unregulated sales. These small “cottage industry” producers are hobbyists, not traffickers, and would not jeopardize the financial stability of larger state licensees authorized to produce up to 10,000 square feet or larger.

Thank you, and I appreciate you considering these reasonable amendments.

-Rebecca Colett

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